

Among Orange County's six House members, the reaction to President Barack Obama's speech tonight urging health care reform came down along party lines: The five GOP lawmakers weren't persuaded one bit and the one Democrat liked his message.

"I was frankly shocked," said Rep. John Campbell. "This wasn't a speech. It was a lecture."

Campbell, R-Irvine, said that any pretense that Obama wanted to work with those on the other side of the aisle was obliterated by this speech.

"Basically he attacked us and scolded us as he did everybody who is opposing this bill," Campbell said. "I think he drove the wedge between people deeper."

Rep. Loretta Sanchez, the only Democrat who represents Orange County, said that she could see the intransigence on the faces of her GOP colleagues.

"They've decided that this is the way they are going to get back into power," Sanchez said of the GOP opposition to the Democrats' and Obama's plan. "That's unfortunate; to play with our country's future and people's futures."

Sanchez said she believes Obama went a long way toward bringing the public around.

"I think when he spoke to the seniors, they will believe him," Sanchez said. "They'll understand we are not having death panels and we're not pulling the plug on them."

But Rep. Gary Miller said he doesn't believe the American public will buy it.

"He's trying to have the American people put pressure on Congress, telling them that this is a great idea," Miller said. "His problem is, too many of the American people know what's in the bill."

Miller, R-Diamond Bar, said what he heard at his town halls meetings was that people are angry about the amount of money that would be spent and about government intervention into the public sector.

"I know he's a busy man, but he needs to read the bill," Miller said of the House bill, a melding of three committee efforts. "I've read it. What he is saying is not what this bill does."

Obama didn't embrace any one piece of legislation during his speech. But Miller said his themes mirrored the House bill.

Rep. Dana Rohrabacher said the president ignored what lawmakers heard when they went home for the August recess.

"Here's a guy who is president of the United States who is basically dismissing all the concerns that people have," said Rohrabacher, R-Huntington Beach. He said the president wrongly said it was all politics.

"I'm sorry. There are some very serious concerns and after you look at the substance of what he presented tonight they were not dealt with in a way to make those concerns go away."

One example Rohrabacher gave was Obama's insistence that no illegal immigrants would benefit from the plan.

The House bill says that. But Republicans wanted a clause asking for proof of legal status before someone could get any benefits. The Democrats said no.

The Republicans booed that part of Obama's speech. And one GOP member shouted out that Obama lied. That, Rohrabacher said, "was rude and inexcusable."

Sanchez, D-Santa Ana, said she's curious to know whether Obama will now send Congress his own piece of legislation or pick and choose from the House bill and the Senate versions if and when both chambers pass their own measures.

Sanchez said she was glad to hear the president say he continues to support a public option. Sanchez also supported his view that individual responsibility must be part of any system reform, including wellness care and people taking better care of themselves.

Rep. Ken Calvert said Republicans could have found common ground with the president if he had jettisoned the public option. But that's not what Calvert, R-Corona, heard tonight.

"The public plan will collapse private insurance and if anyone believes a nationalized health insurance would be less expensive than private insurance ... I don't believe it," Calvert said. "The public option is an absolute deal killer."

For Rep. Ed Royce, a deal killer is the cost of the change Obama wants.

"He was off by a factor of two to one with respect to the bill the Democrats in the House are passing," Royce said. "It's doubly expensive and will lead to a perpetual budget deficit."

Royce said there are ways to solve the problems of the health care system, such as allowing people to cross state lines to buy insurance and to have real change of the medical malpractice rules.

Sen. Barbara Boxer called the speech a success.

"The president did what he had to do tonight to jump start health care legislation," said Boxer, D-Calif. "He put a human face on this issue, speaking eloquently of our fellow citizens who are suffering because of the broken promises of a health insurance system that abandoned them when they needed it most."